

## VMAQ-4 COMMANDING OFFICER'S LETTER TO OUR FAMILIES

As your Marine reports for duty with VMAQ-4, I would like to also welcome you into the Seahawk fold. Whether this is your Marine's first assignment in a Fleet squadron or their fifth, or whether you are new to the Marine Corps family or not, this period in your life is traditionally an exciting and apprehensive time for both you and your Marine.

It is filled with excitement for your Marine, because it represents the next step in the progression of their career in Marine Aviation. If this is their first assignment in the Fleet, then they have finally made it to the unit where they will train and deploy in service of their country. They will now contribute their part to the storied fighting reputation of the United States Marine Corps by putting their skills to the test against the enemy. As a squadron that deploys overseas, they will most likely get just such an opportunity.

It is filled with apprehension for your Marine for the very same reasons that it is exciting. They have either never deployed before, or if they have, perhaps never to a combat zone. On this tour, they may be holding a leadership position that they have not previously held, which will present a host of professional and personal challenges for them. The Seahawks are scheduled to deploy with an upgraded airplane and to a combat zone where most of them have never deployed before. This deployment will test their aviation and basic infantry skills to a degree most have not experienced on a Prowler deployment. For Marines, the challenge is exciting.

As a family member in support of a Marine in VMAQ-4, you will very likely experience all of the same excitement, apprehension and emotions as your Marine. As your Marine's Commanding Officer, I am responsible to the Marine Corps for the combat readiness of VMAQ-4. Combat readiness is my number one priority. This encompasses taking Marines, aircraft, and families through combat deployments and back with all hands accounted for. Everything we do has to support the mission readiness of the squadron.

Family readiness = mission readiness. The more stable your Marine's personal and family life is, the more he or she will be able to concentrate and contribute to the unit's operational readiness. As an institution, the Marine Corps has recognized the need to train and prepare every Marine and their family in order to withstand the pressures of life events, both large and small. To this end, the Corps has hired a Family Readiness Officer (FRO) for each squadron.

The VMAQ-4 FRO is Ms. Lori Gaston. She can be reached at: [lori.gaston@usmc.mil](mailto:lori.gaston@usmc.mil). She is charged with providing official communication, information and resource referral, readiness and deployment support, and volunteer management for the squadron.

My staff and I stand ready to provide any assistance that we can in order to ease the hardships of Marine Corps life. In a deploying Fleet squadron, there will be hardships. These hardships can be overcome. There are numerous resources available to you and your Marine that will get you through tough times. Stay connected and keep communicating with us. If you have an obstacle that you need help overcoming, call us; overcoming obstacles is what Marines do.

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**M. C. Benton**

**Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commanding**